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## Crime Prevention towards a European level

### Editorial

There seems to be a kind of tension in the idea of crime prevention as an international interest. Crime prevention needs to be - by definition - local, community oriented, near the citizens and the (potential) victims of crime. International crime prevention sounds as a *contradictio in terminis*; crime prevention serves the interests of the local community. Still, crime prevention is not just a local, but also a national, and even an international subject of attention.

On a national level crime prevention became, in the eighties, politically relevant for two reasons. First, it was discovered as an alternative to the - expensive - repressive measures in controlling the crime problem. Second, and perhaps more important, it expressed a cultural change in which citizens themselves were held more accountable for their material welfare and immaterial well being. Security was - in neo-liberal states - redefined as citizens' responsibility.

A third reason for national attention is of a later date. In the nineties it became clear that for certain crimes preventive measures should be taken on a national level. In case of organized crime, fraud and corruption legislation and public-private cooperation became necessary. This kind of crime prevention needed to be a national enterprise. Generating from this national interest of prevention as a cost-effective, liberal and up-to-date way of criminal justice policy, there is a growing international interest in crime prevention, for instance from the Council of Europe, the European Union and the United Nations. This issue of the journal reflects the investments of the European Union in crime prevention. During the Dutch presidency of the Union (which changes every half year) a big conference was held in the Netherlands.

The speeches of the plenary sessions of this conference are published, together with the recommendations of the four working groups on surveillance, juvenile crime and violence, urban planning and neighbourhood security, and organized crime. In her opening speech the Dutch Minister of Justice, Winnie Sorgdrager, emphasizes two basic elements of the Dutch crime prevention policy: changing attitudes and pragmatism. The community and its institutions had to be convinced of their own role in preventing crime. Since 1985 hundreds of projects and programmes have been initiated, planned and implemented in a very practical way. The best argument for crime prevention is its effectiveness, according to the minister.

Jan J.M. Van Dijk argues for a crime reduction policy which is research-based. Supported by data of the latest international crime victim survey he shows that measures of crime prevention are cost-effective. The decrease in crime rates, that seems to be persistent in several countries, is partly a result of preventive measures. Irvin Waller informs about some promising crime prevention programmes in various countries. In some cases, there is impressive evidence that they have reduced crime and averted spiralling expenditures. Unfortunately these programmes receive, according to Waller, only modest funding or they disappear after the experimental funding terminates. The International Centre for the Prevention of Crime was created to assist cities and countries in reducing delinquency, violent crime and insecurity by fostering and harnessing access to promising and proven crime prevention programmes. Sir Jack Stewart-Clark outlines the investments of the European Parliament in bringing together actors dealing with the problems of crime prevention and urban delinquency. In his view, crime displacement is a major cause for concern, not only at the local level but also internationally. Within the context of internationalization, however, the local needs must be put into perspective. There is room for further initiatives on prevention and diversion. Because a large percentage of urban crime can be attributed to young people, measures that will especially prevent young people to commit crime are required. According to Michael Tonry crime and deviant behaviour are part of every human society. Although most crimes are forms of deviant behaviour, many forms of deviant behaviour are not crimes. Tonry presents a brief overview of knowledge from research on the effectiveness of four strategic approaches to crime: law enforcement, developmental prevention, situational prevention, and community prevention. He also discusses special crime prevention challenges posed by the increasing national and ethnic diversity in the European countries. State Secretary of the Interior, Jacob Kohnstamm, closed the conference by stressing that punitive measures are doomed to fail, because they are oriented on symptoms. A social perspective on crime

control is needed to make structural progress in controlling crime. Not the police, but local organizations are responsible for education, housing and employment. In the same line the Dutch drug policy must be understood. Addiction is primarily considered as a public health problem. In addition, a distinction is made between soft drugs and hard drugs. Young people experimenting with soft drugs should not automatically be confronted with use and trafficking of hard drugs. That is also a way of crime prevention.

The thematic part of the issue is concluded by the recommendations of the conference. A general need is felt for an exchange of practical information ('best practices') and experiences in crime prevention. In the section Current Issues attention is asked for two interesting brief articles, one on 'women and deviancy' and another on 'ethics and delinquency'. Furthermore a brief view on the 'Manual on the implementation of the UN Declaration of basic principles of justice for victims of crime and abuse of power' is given.